GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1594
ANSWERED ON:08.12.2015
Mining in Forest Areas
De(Nag) Dr. (Smt.) Ratna;Naik Prof. Seetaram Ajmeera

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is aware of the increase in mining activities in forest areas of the country;
(b) if so, the details thereof along with the losses occurred due to such mining in the country; and
(c) the steps taken to regulate such mining activities in the forestareas to restrict the damage to the flora and fauna in the country?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

(SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR)

(a) to (c) The Government of India grants prior approval under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 to use forest land for the purpose for various development projects. The Central Government has accorded approvals under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 over 3,866 ha in 30 cases during 2012, 8,450 ha in 42 cases in 2013, 13,043 ha in 58 cases in 2014 and 4,889 in 35 cases during the year 2015 for mining. Use of forest areas for such activities are approved by the Central Government under Section 2 (ii) of the Forest (conservation) Act, 1980 with adequate environmental safeguards and afforestation measures in lieu of forest land proposed to be utilized for developmental activities. While considering the proposal under the Act, the Central Government inter-alia looks into the following:
i. whether the forests land proposed to be used for non-forest purpose forms part of a nature reserve, national park, wildlife sanctuary, biosphere reserve or forms part of the habitat of any endangered or threatened species of flora and fauna or of an area lying severely eroded catchment;
ii. whether the use of any forest land is for agricultural purposes or for the rehabilitation of persons displaced from their residences by reason of any river valley or hydro-electric project;
iii. whether the State Government or the Union territory Administration, as the case may be, has certified that it has considered all other alternatives and that no other alternatives in the circumstances are feasible and that the required area is the minimum needed for the purpose;
iv. whether the State Government or the Union territory Administration, as the case may be, undertakes to provide at its cost for the acquisition of land of an equivalent area and afforestation thereof;
v. whether the per unit requirement of forest land is significantly higher than the national average for similar projects; and
vi. whether the State Government or the Union territory Administration, as the case may be, before making their recommendation has considered all issues having direct and indirect impact of the diversion of forest land on forest, wildlife and environment.
For all purposes, on the request of the State Government, the Central Government considers the proposal for non-forest use of forest land and accords prior approval as per the Rules and Guidelines framed under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 stipulating mitigative measures in the form of general, standard and specific conditions. General/standard conditions inter-alia include raising of compensatory afforestation (CA), imposition of Net Present Value (NPV) to reduce the adverse impact, minimum tree felling, arrangement of alternate fuels, afforestation measures in the blanks within the forest area, phase wise mining operations, management of safety zone, reclamation of quarry, conservation of topsoil, preparation and implementation of Catchment Area Treatment Plan, Muck Disposal Plan, maintenance of prescribed Right of Way (RoW), plantation of dwarf species. In addition to aforementioned general and standard conditions, specific conditions are also stipulated in the approval based on the recommendation made by the Forest Advisory Committee. In addition to this, the Ministry has also developed criteria for identification of inviolate areas. The said criteria are being finalized in consultation with the concerned Ministries and other stakeholders. The pristine forests where the mining can cause irreversible damage to these forests, will be excluded from the mining.
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